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SUBJECT: UPDATE ON HMONG RETURNEES AND PHA LAK RESETTLEMENT  
VILLAGE

REF: A. VIENTIANE 0227  
[1](#)B. VIENTIANE 0225

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: MFA Spokesman Yong told Emboffs June 4 the 56 recent Hmong voluntary returnees from Thailand should finish processing and be sent to their home provinces soon. He said his video showing earlier returnees living peacefully in Laos was helping convince Huay Nam Khao camp residents to return. Yong had just been to the new resettlement village at Pha Lak for end-of-school-year festivities and showed photos of a clean village with reasonably well-fed and well-clothed village residents. Pha Lak is reaching capacity, and a new larger resettlement village being planned at Khamkeut should be ready later this year. End summary.

#### Recent Returnees

[1](#)2. (SBU) PolOff and PAO visited MFA Press Department Director General and Spokesman Yong Chanthalangsy June 4 to provide advance copy of the 2008 TIP report. Yong took advantage of the opportunity to provide updated information on Hmong returnees from Thailand. He noted that the 56 Hmong (19 families) in the group voluntarily returned May 30 from the Huay Nam Khao holding camp in Petchabun, Thailand, were undergoing processing and should be ready to be returned to their home provinces by June 6. Most are going back to Xiang Khouang and Bolikhamsai Provinces with two people going to Luang Prabang and one to Udomsai. According to Yong these 56 had been separated from the main Huay Nam Khao population before being returned; this reflected a lesson learned from the "bad experience" which had occurred in late February when a group of 11 voluntary returnees departed directly from the main camp amidst protests from camp elements opposed to anyone "breaking ranks" and choosing voluntary return.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Yong said a video he had put together had been screened at Huay Nam Khao. The video showed earlier groups of Hmong back in Laos living peacefully and without mistreatment -- including a comment from one returnee that she was applying for a passport to return to Thailand "legally" to visit relatives at Huay Nam Khao. According to Yong, the opponents of peaceful return "had no more arguments."

#### Pha Lak and Khamkeut Villages

[1](#)4. (SBU) Yong said he had been at Pha Lak Village June 2 to celebrate the end of the school year, International

Children's Day, and International Arbor Day. Pha Lak is a new resettlement village in northern Vientiane Province for Hmong returnees who lack home provinces to return to -- generally because they had been in the jungles as part of the insurgency for many years. The Pha Lak population is now 431 with 67 families. Yong noted Pha Lak has enough land to support 100 households, and the government has finished 96 homes for returnees (so another 200 returnees could be resettled in Pha Lak before it reaches capacity). The government is planning to begin construction of a new village at "Khamkeut," which Yong said is located close to Kilometer 20 on Route 13 north (the main road from Vientiane to Luang Prabang). Khamkeut would be ready beginning in September and have enough space for at least 200 homes, and perhaps as many as 300 -- which would allow resettlement of as many as 1500 future returnees according to Yong.

15. (SBU) Land usage has been an issue at Pha Lak as new families are resettled in formerly open areas which had been used by existing village